

A Discussion on Teaching a Language without Teaching its Culture

Ronnie Goodwin

Gulf University for Science & Technology
Kuwait

Abstract

The human elements of language and culture are intricately and intimately intertwined, which is an aspect that has been studied by many linguistic scholars (Abdo & Breen, 2010; Annamali, 1989; Appel & Muysken, 2006; Gardner, 2012; Gregg, 2006; Hussein, 2013; Gumperz, 2001; Schegloff, 2001). When learning a new language, the cultural attributes of the language become relevant to the comprehension of the target language (L2). The purpose of this paper is to discuss the practice of teaching a second language (L2) without teaching the relative or content culture associated with the language. This is particularly relevant for individuals that speak Arabic and are learning English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). The ensuing discussion will present a case study reflection of Jordanian Arabic speaking EFL/ESL students and how culture affects the comprehension of the English language due to the grammatical, syntactic, structural, and other differentiating characteristics in each linguistic paradigm, as well as a study conducted at a Middle Eastern university.

Keywords: Language, Culture, ESL/ EFL, Arabic language

A Discussion on Teaching a Language without Teaching its Culture

Why Investigate Teaching Language without Teaching Culture?

As the world becomes increasingly more globalized, being multi-lingual is a highly beneficial skill to possess. This has inspired increased efforts in many developed nations such as Europe, Asia, and the United States to establish English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in their primary and secondary educational forums. However, some linguistic concepts are culturally derived, making it difficult to teach the language without explaining the cultural aspects associated with the concept (Annamali, 1989). Within the English language alone, numerous slang terms and colloquialisms are actually culture-specific in that different cultures use different words to describe the same things. For example, the word ‘money’ is also referred to as ‘cheddar’, ‘cheese’, ‘ducats’, ‘dead presidents’, ‘Benjamin’s’, ‘moolah’, ‘cake’, ‘denaro’, ‘pesos’, and ‘chips’, among many others, and the slang used often depends on the cultural paradigms of the speaker.

The current focus on creating learner-centered environments for ESL/EFL individuals requires the educator to take responsibility for the learning process by developing methods that can be engaged to support linguistic autonomy in the target language (Casteel & Ballantyne, 2010). This brings into focus the customary practice for ESL/EFL programs that teach children and adults to exclude cultural education and teach only the functional aspects of the target language necessary for fluency and linguistic comprehension. Although programs have been implemented to teach children English as a second language or English as a foreign language, there has not been a preponderance of research literature that discusses the relevance of teaching or not teaching culture in conjunction with the target language (Sybing, 2011).

However, existing studies do indicate that the absence of the learner-centered environment is typical when learning a foreign language without the benefit of the adjoining cultural dynamics and this can hinder the learner’s ability to properly comprehend the foreign language and culture (Corrius & Pujol, 2010). In many instances, ESL/EFL learners attempting to supplement culturally devoid linguistic instruction with English language translation (ELT) dictionaries discover these can be of limited assistance. Typically categorized as monolingual, bilingual, and bilingualized, ELT dictionaries are frequently of limited use because they tend to be written from a linguistic or culture-centric, homogenizing perspective (Corrius & Pujol, 2010). Some EFL/ESL students seek supplemental cultural input from peripheral sources, such as television or their peers, increasing the draw learners have to the pop culture associated with the target language (Sybing, 2011).

Additionally, in countries where English is not the dominant language, EFL/ESL students typically pursue such study because of a desire to communicate with native speakers and research has identified cultural differences in the learning styles of various ethnic groups (Sybing, 2011). The field of sociolinguistic anthropology examines the relationships between the social variations, linguistic variances, and social contexts in which communications occur, including non-verbal messages (Miller, 2007). Some analysts have speculated that the socio-cultural attributes of language can be integrated into ESL/EFL forums through a series of strategies that have to do with the “...localization, delocalization, globalization, and glocalization of language and/or culture” (Corrius & Pujol, 2010, p. 135). The sociolinguistic theory indicates

that culture, society, and individual social standing all have determining influence over language (Miller, 2007). But how are these elements taught in ESL/EFL environments?

Understanding the depth and breadth of the synthesis between culture and language is an important facet in assisting educators to provide EFL/ESL students with the most advantageous practices that will assist in their educational pursuits. It is hoped that this discussion regarding the practice and plausibility of teaching a language without teaching the native culture of that language will underscore proposals indicating the best linguistic and cultural strategies to help the EFL/ESL community improve students' linguistic and cultural competencies. It is also anticipated that this analysis will help teachers evaluate the efficacy of different EFL/ESL programs and promote the creation of more effective EFL/ESL programs (Corrius & Pujol, 2010). The course of this examination will be guided by the research questions stated below.

Research Questions

The purpose of this project is to examine the dynamics of linguistic acquisition in order to determine:

1. What is the impact of teaching language without teaching the relative culture?
2. What is the purpose of "teaching" a language and not teaching/learning its culture?
3. Do some institutions require this and if so, why 'teach' or try to teach the language?
4. How can someone learn English but not its culture, since in some cases this can be disrespectful, and still respect its rules?

In examining these questions, this research will focus on certain dynamics specific in Middle Eastern EFL/ESL learning environments through examination of grammatical and structural similarities, as well as differences present in the Arabic and English languages.

Literature Review

The aim of this research is to investigate the importance of culture in the acquisition of language. There are many indications that language and culture are derived from each other and there is evidence that culture affects the way individuals interpret information (Miller, 2007). The literature review is performed to gain a deeper understanding of the contextual setting of the research questions in addition to the phenomena examined in the research.

The literature review will address the definitional issues and differences between code-switching and code-mixing, and thus examine its forms of constraints and patterns. The literature review will also discuss the dynamics of bilingual education, the functions of code-switching and code-mixing, and the cultural impacts on language acquisition. In addressing these issues, this literature review will draw on examples from empirical studies that have examined the state of bilingual education, sociolinguistic and cultural-linguistic dynamics, and the prevalence of code-switching involving other languages. The literature review will also discuss the extra-linguistic features that affect the acquisition of a foreign language and the usage of different forms of code-switching and code-mixing in individuals learning a foreign language.

Linguistics & Culture

All language learners consciously and unconsciously use language learning skills when they are learning a new language. Despite this, research has focused on language strategies used by only adolescents and adults (Griffiths & Parr, 2001). Education for ESL/EFL individuals in countries such as the USA, Canada, and Australia has been the primary focus of studies regarding language-learning strategies due to the large number of people migrating to these countries (Oxford, 1990).

There is a consensus that people do not acquire language skills in the same way, illustrating that code-switching and code-mixing are common phenomena in speech, provided that at least two languages exist in a community (Appel & Muysken, 2006; McKay & Hornberger, 1996; Philip, Oliver, & Mackey, 2008; Walte, 2007; Weinreich, 1953). In some societies, the expected means of communication is code-switched speech (Auer, 2002). Although code-switching and code-mixing were once viewed as interference phenomena among *imperfect bilinguals*, these entities have come to be recognized as imperative and indispensable communication strategies (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Studies have primarily investigated bilingual students placed in immersion classrooms, as well as individuals in ESL classrooms when attempting to evaluate the efficacy of teaching language without accompanying instruction regarding the parent culture (Allam & Salmani-Nadoushan, 2009). The high influx of foreign immigrants in every developed nation has increased the demand for EFL/ESL educational programs. This has facilitated an investigation of language learning behaviors, principally how culture interacts with morphological development (Cohen, 1998).

One common mode of speech alteration when Arabic speakers are learning a new language is code-switching. Code-switching is considered as “appropriate changes in the speech situation” rather than “an unchanged speech situation”, and it is also indicated that this switching does not occur “within a single sentence” (Weinreich, 1953, p. 73). Simply defined, code-switching is “the mixing of elements of two linguistic varieties within a single utterance or text” (Gluth, 2008, p. 6). When used in ESL/EFL communities, this demonstrates how the meaning in code-switching is derived from the stylistic association between sentences or phrases (Lefkowitz, 1991).

Defining conversational code-switching has been challenging because it frequently occurs in conjunction with other kinds of language contact phenomena including convergence, borrowing, and interference (Gluth, 2008; Halmari, 1997). In addition, codes themselves involve a high degree of variability and are often viewed as non-standard, in particular when bilinguals lack proficiency in what is known or perceived as standard codes (Gluth, 2008). Interestingly, preceding studies determined that one needs to perceive differently the process of selecting one definite code from the process of mixing as many as two existing codes, to generate the product that may be regarded as a third code (Bentahila & Davies, 1983).

Furthermore, research has proposed that code-switching is performed only for the duration of a conversational discourse, while the code-mixing is not performed with full sentences and has the grammar structures from other languages (Annamali, 1989). Additionally, it is suggested that code-mixing is essentially the mechanism of mixing elements from a minimum of two languages within one utterance, differentiating it from code-switching in that the latter is the product of this mix (Bader, 1995; Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Relevance to Current Cultural-linguistic Practice

Currently, many nations have programs implemented intended to provide ESL/EFL individuals with a variety of competencies, such as English Composition/Reading classes in overseas institutions outside of the U.S. However, these programs have traditionally approached bilingual education using the submersion method, which does little, if anything, to preserve the first language while the student transitions to the target language (Otto, 2010). Transitional and developmental bilingual programs or dual-language and second foreign language immersion

programs have been atypical structures in educational forums (Otto, 2010). Current knowledge regarding the impact cultural paradigms have on overall educational success has warranted further study regarding the direct effect of teaching language without teaching culture.

Although there is much support for the use of ‘proper’ or technical English as it is taught in scholastic settings, it is commonly reserved for these environments and not often heard in casual conversation (Gregg, 2006). Nonetheless, proper diction and speech is taught when learning any new language, which is reflective of the absence of the cultural idiosyncrasies apparent in every language (McKay & Hornberger, 1996). Considered as a skill, the ability to speak multiple languages can be used in specific atmospheres, such as professional venues, scholarly settings, when writing professional communications, and a variety of other similar circumstances.

Research Methodology

This research will perform a case study analysis using the expertise from existing research to help guide this examination of EFL/ESL linguistic acquisition and is the basis for the decision to select the qualitative method. In adapting a qualitative procedure for examination of the research questions presented, the phenomenological approach has been selected because using case studies allows the researcher to obtain more intimate knowledge of EFL/ESL learners within realistic contexts in order to understand the different behaviors of linguistic acquisition. Interpretation through naturalistic observations creates opportunities to determine the differences in the learning methods of the participants to examine how various attributes of the learner, such as age, race, and gender, affects their learning experiences (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). More importantly, a qualitative approach provides a better understanding of what influences behaviors, but also the meaning that the participants derive from their actions, including the human differences that can occur during linguistic acquisition (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Examining existing case studies primarily involves reviewing existing studies to consolidate the most recent, relevant professional deductions, which principally involves drawing conclusions by analyzing existing sources of data. The analysis of current research typically involves making decisions ahead of time so that the process of data collection is smooth, simple, and systematic (Newman, 2011). This method of research provides a test of the hypothesis by examining existing case studies and, thereby, avoids most of the ethical and practical problems of other research designs (Babbie, 2007). Relative to this aspect, using case studies as the seat of this research, also avoids common complications associated with participant reactivity, as well as participant inclinations to behave in a different way when they know they are being observed (Newman, 2011).

The dynamics of the Arabic language, the native tongue of individuals from the Middle East, necessitates a method of inquiry based on the understanding that the reality of linguistic acquisition consists of objects and events as they are perceived by the individual learner (Hernandez, 2012). Case study research requires the use of relatively few resources since it allows for the examination of only one participant at a time, sometimes requiring the dedicated attention of more than one research assistant over a period of an hour or more (Babbie, 2007; Newman, 2011). Once data has been collected through the case study research process, it is a relatively simple matter to conduct an analysis of the compiled data.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for this study involved reviewing a case analysis detailing the learning experience of Arabic speaking students in Jordan (Abdo & Breen, 2010). In the primary case study used in analysis for this research, six student participants were used to study the linguistic acquisition in the ESL/EFL learning environment with the subjects being categorized into three groups according to their linguistic competence, behavioral characteristics and expressions, and their overall performance as students (Abdo & Breen, 2010). The categories used to analyze the subjects designated participants as “strong”, “average”, or “low-achieving” students and additional features examined included verbal and non-verbal communication (Abdo & Breen, 2010). These facets of communication examined included traits such as nervousness, shyness, mispronunciation, non-verbal communication, translation, and vocabulary with the subjects being separated into groups of two (Abdo & Breen, 2010).

Additionally, the research will include analysis of the technique of code-switching and code-mixing among the Arabic-English bilinguals using theoretical frameworks for linguistic acquisition since these language paradigms present a primary example of the cultural differences in how talk differs as it occurs in every day speech (Gumperz, 2001). Each of these tools helped in collecting different forms of information about the participant that then assisted in the analysis of the code-switching behavior of the participants (Schegloff, 2001). The case study selected presented data collected during six meetings over a timeframe of three weeks with additional data that incorporated other instructional aspects, such as student conduct and attitudes, the classroom settings and conditions, teacher behavior and demeanor, and other general conditions that were observed, documented, and analyzed by the researcher (Abdo & Breen, 2010).

The case study employs the devices of participant and naturalistic observation, as well as interviewing as the primary modes of data collection so that the data could be examined using a standard ethnographic communication archetype (Abdo & Breen, 2010). The data analysis includes the incorporation of field notes containing verbal and non-verbal communication (such as words, gestures, and eye contact) during the EFL classes, as well as both impromptu and elicited verbal statements during individual interview sessions (Abdo & Breen, 2010). These details supplied the evidence from which strategies deemed “effective” or “ineffective” were identified (Abdo & Breen, 2010)

Theoretical Framework

The instructional strategy used by ESL/EFL educators determines whether they will attempt to integrate cultural aspects into the lessons (Sybing, 2011). Instruction that is used for teaching has changed focus and shifted to learner-centered environments that place increased attention to the learning processes that take place. The definition of strategy in this context is taken as a procedure that is used to develop, and promote learning process, it is developed by both the teacher and the learner based on the learning outcome desired (Hymes, 1964). The choice of a learning strategy will affect the way the learner acquires, selects, integrates, and organizes new information, and may alter the motivational state of the learner (Hymes, 1967).

The studies on strategy research that have been done mostly focus on the attributes of a good learner, and show the strategies a good language learner employs in the process of learning the second language (L2) (Joseph, 2013). This shows that all language learners use certain types

of strategies, but the occurrence of use varies from learner to learner. Learners' have psychological and social differences, and therefore cannot use the same learning strategies. Strategies used for adolescents and adults cannot be used for children.

Linguistic Development Theories

Cognitive

The cognitive development perspective is based on the theories of Jean Piaget and speculates that linguistic acquisition comes with maturation and cognitive development, which is the foundation for teaching language (Ball, 2010). This perspective of linguistic development encourages early childhood educators to pay close attention to the cognitive developmental stages of their students and encourage stimulatory activities as precursors to the onset of linguistic development (Hill, 2007).

Behaviorist

The behaviorist perspective highlights the role of "nature" and the stimuli, responses, and reinforcements that occur in the child's environment based on B. F. Skinner and his theory of "operant conditioning" along with the notion that children are "blank slates" before they are taught through various situations and learn language through imitative speech (Decker, Decker, Freeman, & Knopf, 2009). This perspective encourages teachers to focus on the types of stimuli and reinforcements regarding language that children encounter and would encourage them to communicate verbally.

Interactionist

The interactionist perspective is based on the sociocultural interactions that help children develop their linguistic capacities and is based on the theories of Lev Vygotsky, whose premise contends that language development in early childhood is formed through social interactions with those in their surroundings that create a language acquisition support system (LASS) (Giorgis & Glazer, 2008). This theory requires the adult to create conditions for effective development and to be aware of the child's zone of proximal development and know what the child can accomplish on their own and what will require scaffolding from the supervising adult.

Cultural-linguistic Theories

Code-switching

Myers-Scotton's model of a matrix language was developed to "account for and explain structural constraints on intra-sentential code-switching" (Myers-Scotton, Jake, & Okasha, 1996, p. 10). At the basic level, the model assumes that the two languages involved in a speech event do not have equal participation (Myers-Scotton, Jake, & Okasha, 1996). Thus, this theory hypothesizes that a base language exists during the process of code-switching. It is commonly asserted that people are equipped with a language faculty in their being that makes them capable of assessing linguistic choices (Myers-Scotton, 2000).

In this context, code-switching can be viewed as a phenomenon that permits morphemes from two or more codes to be present in a subordinate clause, using *complementiser* to refer to a subordinate clause. When a bilingual brings two languages together, a dominant language is actively working (Liu, 2008). In this case, one language is delegated the role of matrix language, which is the dominant language, while the other is the embedded language. The matrix language becomes the source of the grammatical frame of constituents while both the matrix and

embedded language supply morphemes (Joseph, 2013). The matrix language influence is always present in bilingual societies, and each of the languages exists alone at its own time. In intra-sentential code-switching there is always a matrix language (Hymes, 1964; Hymes, 1967).

Whorfian

According to Whorfian theory, our words are coded in language and so are our thoughts and this linguistic pattern dictates more than just the language we speak. This pattern also dictates our sense of reason, how we view nature, our relationship views, and every other aspect of our conscious and unconscious mind (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). This phenomenon is known as linguistic determinism and is based on Whorf's theory that every language utilizes a unique set of semantic representations (Ajayi, 2008). These semantics determine aspects of our conceptual representations which is how linguistics influences habitual thought (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011).

When analyzed, Whorf's theory has proven to bear significant merit. Franz Boas' linguistic analysis revealed that many languages exclude specification of gender, tenses, location, and a vast array of descriptive terms present within the English language (Sybing, 2011). Other linguists believe that lexical development is contingent upon the life experiences of those speaking the language, meaning a culture that has only thatch-roofed huts would not be able to conceptualize a building, thus could not fathom a skyscraper (Sybing, 2011). However, slang is a lexical innovation created by individuals and often incorporates words and phrases from various languages, as well as variations of standard words (Bullard, Johnson, Morris, Fox, & Howell, 2010). Originally considered to be the lowest form of communication, slang is now commonly used in the highest social circles and is perpetuated based upon its usefulness and applicability (Bullard, Johnson, Morris, Fox, & Howell, 2010).

Convergence & Divergence

Convergence was seen as the strategy that allowed individuals to adapt to the communicative behaviors in terms of the features identified. The convergence of speech reflects the often unconscious need of a speaker to be socially integrated or identified with the other. Basically, convergence assumed that more the speaker becomes familiar to the listener then makes it more likely for the listener to also like the speaker. As such, convergence through speech and non-verbal behavior is among strategies essentially adopted to enhance one's similarity with the other (Fleet & Torr, 2007). The result of convergence, generally, is the speaker's attractiveness (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008).

"Divergence" is referred to "the way in which speakers accentuate speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and others" (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991, p. 8). The linguistic divergence takes both verbal and non-verbal forms. In differentiating convergence from divergence, it was observed that "Convergence is a strategy of identification with the communication patterns of an individual internal to the interaction, whereas divergence is a strategy of identification with linguistic communicative norms of some reference group external to the immediate situation" (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991, p. 27). Divergence borrows from the theory of intergroup relations and social change proposed by Tajfel and colleagues (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). This theory holds that the intergroup social comparisons influence members of a particular social group to search for and at times create dimensions that positively differentiate them from individuals in the other groups (DeCapua, 2008). In other

words, divergence makes individuals feel more satisfied because they feel they belong to more superior group. As a result, the individual feels they possess adequate social identity, and they feel self-worthy (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991).

Cultural Dynamics of Language Acquisition

Culture is technically defined as people's learned, shared behaviors and beliefs (Miller, 2007). The culture of the Middle East entails values that consider teaching as a noble profession. Teachers typically command significant levels of respect from both the students and the community at large. This environment facilitates the student's interpretation of the teacher as the benchmark to which they try to emulate, which enables the educator to have a dominating influence in their academic decisions (Gumperz, 1982).

It is through this perception that a second language learner will tend to rely more on the teacher than the rest of the students (Gumperz, 2001). As stated earlier, the strategies should be tailor made to meet the dynamic needs of the student including culture and therefore, the teacher should lead the student in the best way to easily and comprehensively master the language as there is a higher chance the teacher will dominate and influence the choice of strategy to be used by such a learner. The teacher should take the cultural background to effectively deliver the best as the learner expects the teacher to be perfect.

Gender is an issue that is of great importance, especially in the Arab world. The Muslim religion and their form of government stipulate the separation of the two genders in relation to learning; therefore, enhancing the natural differences in the cognitive processing of information between the two genders that affects how each learns (Allam & Salmani-Nadoushan, 2009). Social effectiveness is the worst hit strategy in the Arabic set up. Due to their gender bias set up, the system maintains single gender relationship. The system blocks out the social effectiveness of schooling, and they are forced to understand one relationship, i.e., gender biased relationship. With such, the second language learner will have difficulty in learning language in an environment that will differ from what s/he already knows (Oxford, 1990). The understanding of such background information will help the instructors of these students to structure their strategies in a manner that is acceptable by the learner. At no instance should there be a conflict between the learner and the teacher concerning social setup or difference in belief; therefore, the teacher should appreciate the cultural beliefs of the learner.

Language acquisition is based on mastery of the five aspects of language knowledge, which are classified as morphemic, phonetic, pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic (Otto, 2010). These elements constitute the foundational attributes that comprise the three levels of language knowledge, which are linguistic knowledge, metalinguistic knowledge, and verbalization of metalinguistic knowledge (Otto, 2010). Since the mother tongue is every child's first language, this is the foundation by which each individual bases all future knowledge concerning language acquisition (Crim, et al., 2008). Learning how to communicate orally is the prelude to mastery of an additional linguistic paradigm (Harris, 2009).

Every language has a standard lexicon and all cultures have forms of slang terminology within their dialect (Battenburg, 2010). Slang is a cultural aspect of linguistic expression that is typically defined as an informal way of speaking derived exclusively from the speaker's awareness of social and stylistic customs as well as the slang status of any word or phrase (Bullard, Johnson, Morris, Fox, & Howell, 2010). Such terminologies often exist as culturally relevant jargon that interjects various stylistic elements into daily vernacular and they are linked to different kinds of social interactions that give the unique vocabulary meaning (Duff, 2001).

The recognition of slang or jargon as a linguistic element is specifically linked with the connection these expressions have to cultural or societal dynamics (Joseph, 2013). This includes the social jargon of small, localized groups that may be widespread for a short period before fading into obscurity. The origins and dynamics of casual speech tend to be ethnically inclined and originate within various areas so those native to the area can deliver messages faster and express ideas, events, or experiences (Bullard, Johnson, Morris, Fox, & Howell, 2010). Individuals that are attempting to become bi or multi-lingual do not always speak in the same way, illustrating that code-switching and code-mixing are common phenomena in speech, where at least two languages communally exist (Annamali, 1989). The most basic definition of code-switching describes an act that occurs in conversation where two languages come into contact with each other and both languages are used interchangeably (Appel & Muysken, 2006; Deibert, 2008; Halmari, 1997; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Liu, 2008; Poplack, 2001).

These transient dynamics create perpetual fluctuations in linguistic meaning that are culturally derived and the creation of new terminologies ensures that languages are continually changed and renewed (Miller, 2007). The migration of casual conversational terms between cultures and races and the adaptations of these cultural terms by different groups help diverse people connect through the assimilation of linguistics and magnify the boundaries of interpersonal communication (Bullard, Johnson, Morris, Fox, & Howell, 2010). The paradigms of linguistic acquisition are not restricted to simply words, but gestures and body language as well and nonverbal messages are a large part of interpersonal communication.

During informal communication, people typically use physical gestures, facial expressions, and many other informal types of body language to convey various messages. Some of these informal communicative patterns are coded within the culture of language deeply imbedded within the human vernacular not limited by social boundaries and can exist in all languages, cultures, and classes of society. In examining the cultural aspects of linguistic acquisition and the development of multi-language skills, the deeper relevance to EFL/ESL individuals can be examined through analysis of current practice.

For example, students whose native language is Arabic face a particularly challenging learning curve when attempting to learn English as a second language due to the significant differences inherent in the dynamics of these vastly different languages (Abdo & Breen, 2010). Although there are many differences, these are just a few of the major obstacles that present for EFL/ESL learners whose native tongue is Arabic:

1. Arabic is written from right to left, which is the exact opposite of English,
2. Arabic orthography is subjective depending on the placement of the letter in the word, which means that the shapes of letters varies according to their initial, medial, or end placement in a word. Conversely, English letters only change shape if they are upper or lower case,
3. In English grapho-phonemic rules that govern the treatment of vowels are unpredictable and irregular, but predictable in Arabic,
4. Verb-free sentences in English would include a copula, but are allowable in Arabic, and
5. Arabic tenses are indicated by the addition of a suffix to a root.

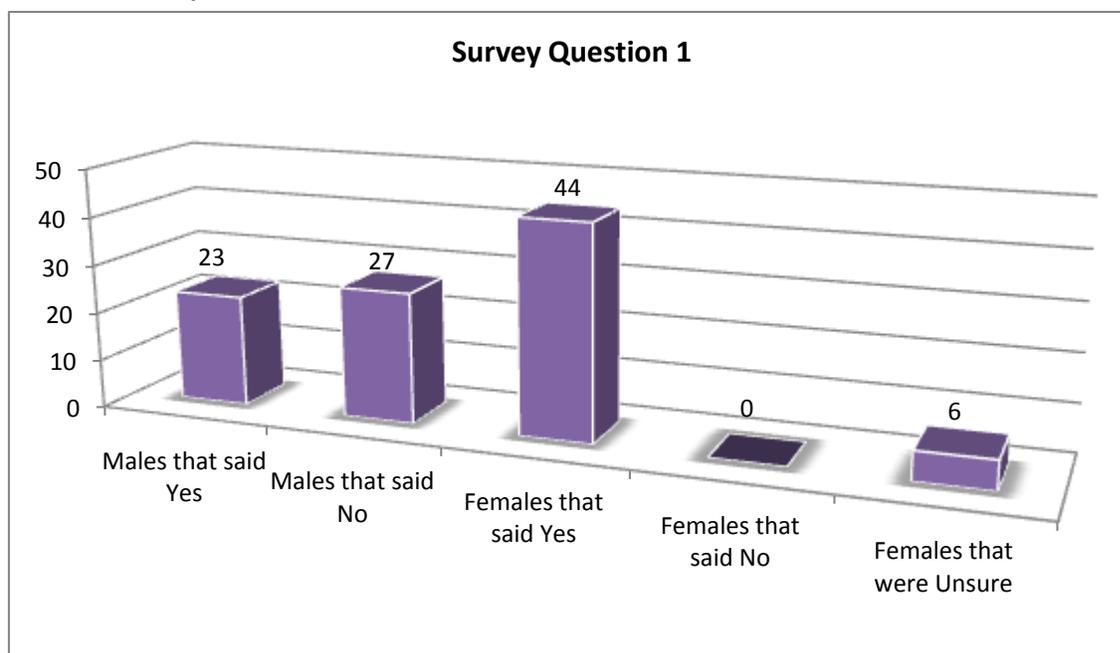
While these are simply a few of the rules that differentiate these two languages, the differences are so vast that Jordanian ESL/EFL learners cannot rely on Arabic (L1) competence for building English (L2) competence (Abdo & Breen, 2010).

Results

Examination of the selected case study demonstrates that there is a need for the ESL teachers to understand the skills, and cultural heritage that their students bring to the classroom (Abdo & Breen, 2010). Additional research suggests that teachers should develop pedagogical practices that investigate the relationship that exist between student's cognitive progress, the social, and the cultural context in which they engage in ESL/EFL educational paradigms (Hernandez, 2012). The case study further indicates that learning is mediated by social-cultural practices of students.

To supplement the indications presented in the case study, a survey was conducted (see Appendix A) in which students and EFL/ESL instructors were asked about their views regarding the inclusion of culturally relevant instruction amalgamated with the linguistic context. The survey conducted incorporates the responses of 50 EFL (25 male, 25 female) students at a Middle-Eastern university, 15 EFL professors (10 male, 5 female), 50 regular academic students (25 male, 25 female), and 25 academic professors (18 male, 7 female). The results of this survey is presented in Tables 1-4 and strengthen the argument posited in this paper, which favors the inclusion of cultural paradigms when teaching ESL/EFL to Arabic speaking learners.

Table1: Survey Question 1 Results



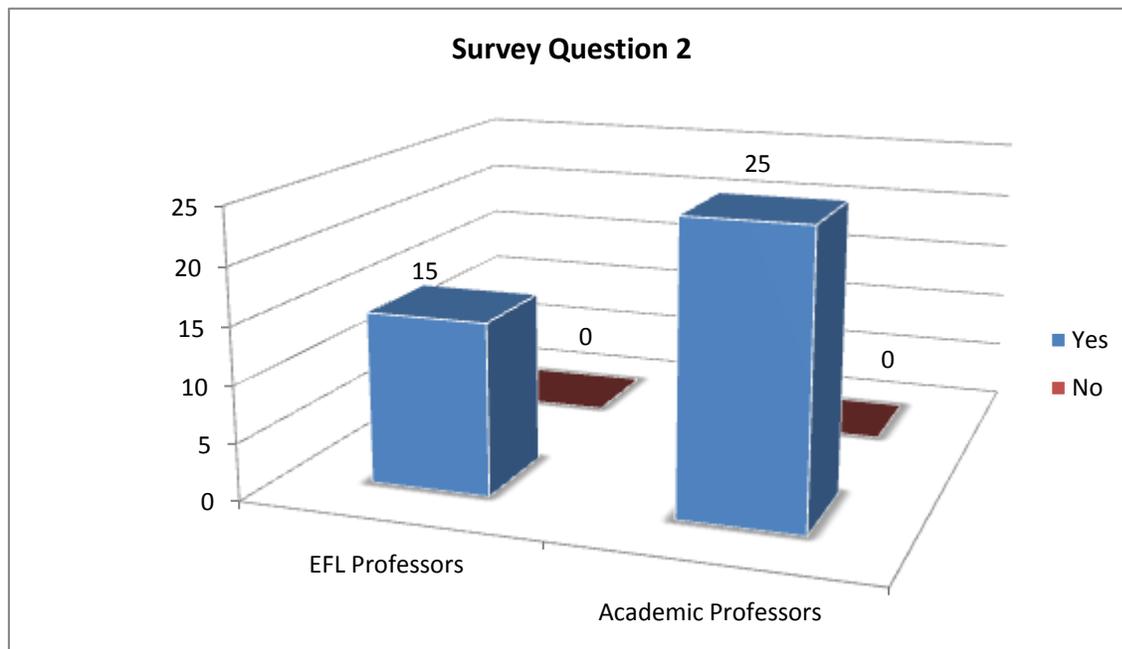
The query presented for the first question of the survey was: *Does culture have to be a part of English Language Learning?* The results illustrated in Table 1 show that 27 EFL male students responded 'No, we can learn culture as we go through university'; 23 EFL male students stated 'Yes, it is part of English language'; 44 female students responded 'Yes, we need to learn all to help with understanding of English language and culture'; and 6 female students were unsure.

Social-cultural approach to be used in language learning requires a new shift for teaching ESL since there are complexities involved. The learners are social beings who are complex and whose language learning process is orchestrated throughout their socially and culturally

constructed artifacts. Communication is mediated by the learners' social and cultural identities, and therefore, the language learning process should be viewed with respect of the social background, and structure. Learning English in itself as a second language constitutes the dialogical interdependence between the learner, the society, social practices, and the context of learning must be brought a bout in the classroom.

The illustration in Table 2 presents the responses from the participants to the second survey question.

Table 2: Results of Survey Question 2

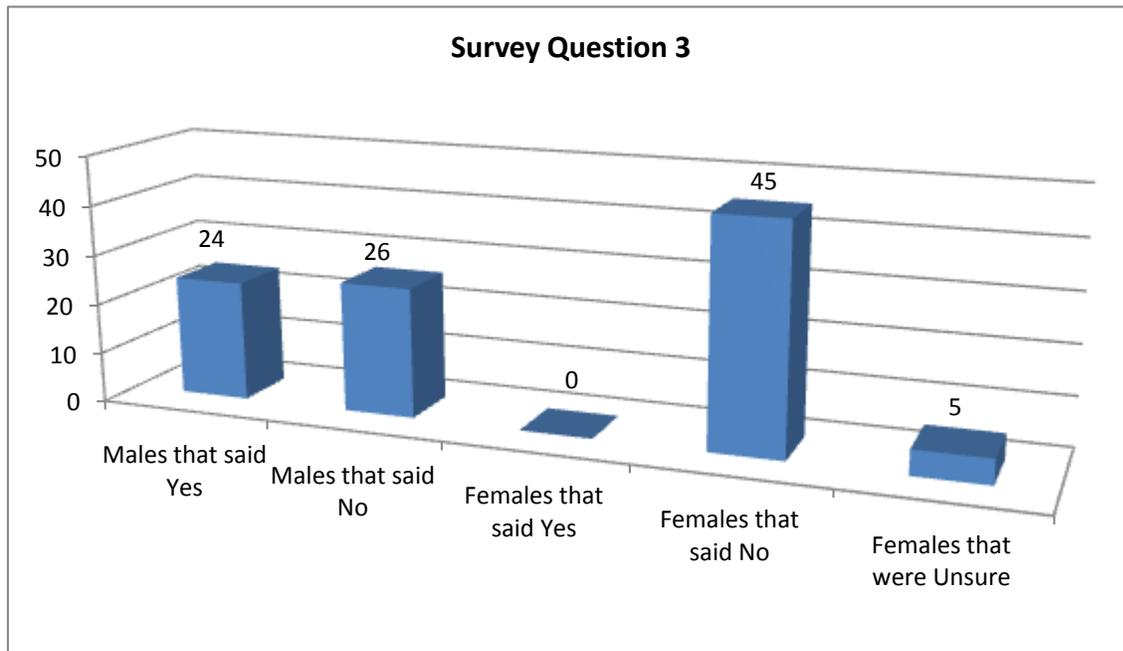


The second survey question posed asked: *Does culture have to be a part of English Language Teaching?* The question was focused on the educators in the respondent pool, both EFL professors and academic professors, and all 40 faculty members replied 'Yes, it is needed; it is a requirement of the learning process. How can this not be put into teaching the language?'

Research suggest that social and cultural context of everyday brings about human cognitive development, and its functioning, and that individual's learning cannot be detached from other people's learning. The connection between the individual and the society do connect learning together with the cognitive aspect of the mind. Thorne put that language is entrenched into the society, and that people interprets information through their consultation of their social and cultural backgrounds. Second language learning should be instituted within the context of the micro-social and the structures of the institution. The social cultural approach suggests the need to expound on language teaching knowledge situations, the possibilities that can be afforded by social and cultural institutional structures, and the understanding of how teaching relates to the pedagogical practices and the social background of the learners (Ajayi, 2008).

The illustration in Table 3 presents the responses from the participants to the third survey question, which was: *Is it possible to consider a language-learning environment without teaching the culture?*

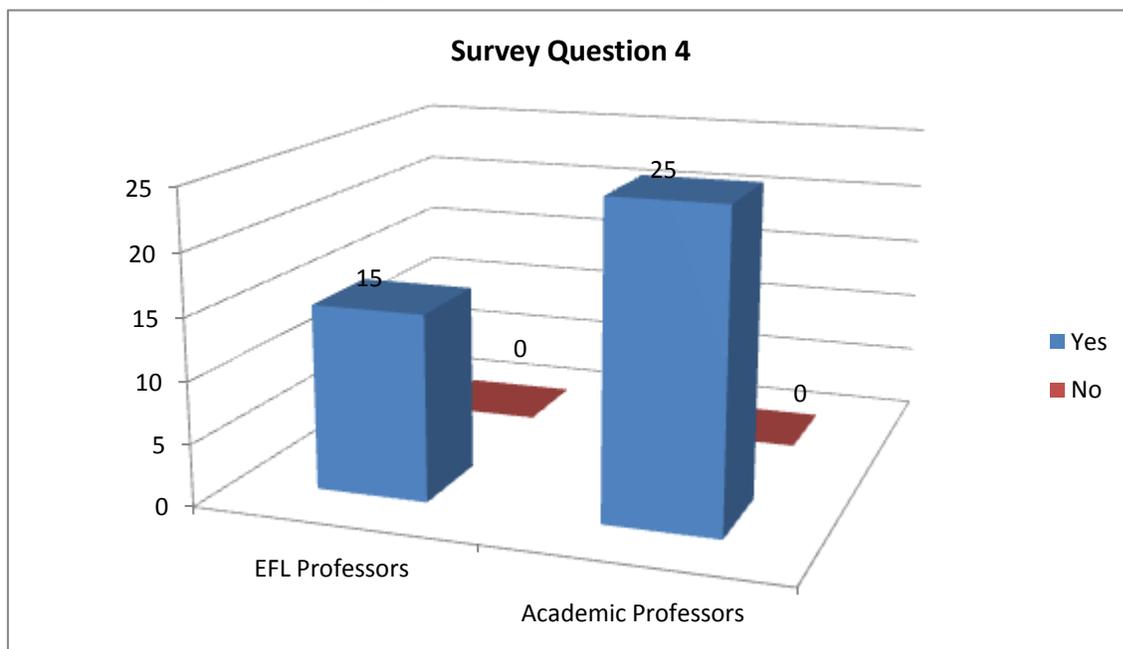
Table 3: Survey Question 3 Responses



The results for this survey question illustrated in Table 3 show that 24 EFL male students indicated that, ‘Yes, we only need to know the words to communicate’; 26 EFL male students said, ‘No, words do not tell us everything’; 45 female students said, ‘No, culture of words/how and when to use them are important to understanding the life’ and 5 female students were unsure.

The fourth and final research question posed to participants was: *Is it possible to consider a language learning environment without teaching the culture?*

Table 4: Results for Survey Question 4



This question was also focused on the educators in the respondent pool, both EFL professors and academic professors, and all 40 faculty members responded “No, culture must be taught, always, since culture helps us explain why something is done a certain way, and culture helps us to explain things when words are not used.”

Code-switching has been documented as a way of signaling ethnic identity and unearthing shared background knowledge, which, for Arabic-speaking ESL/EFL individuals provides a stronger platform for language acquisition (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). Through etiquette code-switching (also termed emblematic code-switching) speakers indicate that they are members of a certain speech community or ethnic group and that they are in solidarity with the other members of that group or community. Accomplishing this does not require extensive code-switching. It is documented that in diglossic situations, the native language of the bilingual or multilingual speaker tends to take the “we” code, and the second language is normally associated with the “they” code. The “we” code has a sense of intimacy, personal attachment and involvement, whilst the “they” code has authority connotations and distance attached to it (Helfrich & Bosh, 2011).

Basically, the theory is based on the fact that in a communication process, losses and gains are inevitable, which is why code-switching or code-mixing should be encouraged (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). It was further asserted that accommodation theory explains the diverse contextual processes that impact sociolinguistic codes, styles, and strategies that speakers select and consequences of such selections (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). Proponents of this theory hold that during social interactions speakers are in need of social approval from their listeners. Therefore, teachers should encourage and support code-switching in their students.

As a result, speakers tend to adapt their speech toward the direction of the code preferable to the listener, as way of seeking their social approval. This is what has been termed *convergence* or *accommodation*. Further, the theory retains that, during some speech instances, the speaker wants to set himself/herself aside from the listener. To achieve this aim in a speech event, the speaker places emphasis on the difference existing between the speaker and the listener. The way in which speakers stress this difference is through the choice of code. This is termed as *speech divergence* (Gardner, 2012). This speech behavior has been attributed to political, national, and cultural reasons (Appel & Muysken, 2006). This is an indication that code-switching and refusal to code switch, under this theory, all serves a particular purpose for the speaker.

Conclusion

Summarily, learning a new language is a complex task since many attributes of linguistics are derived from the surrounding culture. Verbal comprehension of a new language is the prelude to literacy in the target language and individuals that have strong oral competencies are more successful in mastery of the new language than those that are not (Gardner, 2012). In many circumstances, comprehension of the associated cultural dynamics adds clarity to the linguistic formalities relative to the target language and can help instructors convey details to their students (Gholson & Stumpf, 2005). The ability to comprehend spoken words will help ESL/EFL learners develop the phonetic skills to become literate in comprehending written words (Ajayi, 2008).

As the individual learns to comprehend the meaning of the words being spoken to them, they also learn how to mimic the sounds. As their linguistic skills increase, they become better able to ask questions and articulate their thoughts, helping them to become better learners (DeCapua, 2008). As the relevance of culture to the linguistic paradigm becomes better understood, the practice of teaching culture in conjunction with the associated language requires further study so that the real benefits can be better understood. Although this brief discourse has revealed several elements of the relationship between language and culture, as well as several of these benefits, there is still a need for a stronger body of literature based on research that can provide details regarding helpful methodologies that can be employed when instructing EFL/ESL students in a new language.

Limitations of the Study

Research using the findings of a case study has inherent limitations in that the study sample may be limited, as well as the extent of control the researcher has since this process relies on examination of information derived from restricted venues. Furthermore, restricting the discussion to EFL/ESL learners from the Middle East that speak Arabic as their first language limits the generalizability of the results since the Arabic language has numerous distinctions that differ from the dynamics of other languages such as Spanish, French, or Italian. Another limitation stems from the manner in which the data is collected because case study data often represent natural behavior, making it difficult to categorize and organize responses in a meaningful and qualitative way. Case study research often requires some creativity on the researcher's part, such as analysis, and the challenges mentioned will be addressed by careful selection of the studies used in support of the findings to avoid inclusion of invalid details.

About the Author:

Dr. Ronnie Goodwin completed his doctorate in English: Rhetoric & Linguistics at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2005. He has over 24 years of teaching experience in university, community college, private and public school settings. He specializes in teaching Linguistics, Business Writing, English Composition and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Dr. Goodwin is also experienced in teaching intensive English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses.

References

- Abdo, I. B., & Breen, G.-M. (2010). Teaching EFL to Jordanian students: New strategies for enhancing English acquisition in a distinct Middle Eastern student population. *Creative Education, 1*, 39-50. doi:10.4236/ce.2010.11007
- Ajayi, L. (2008). ESL theory-practice dynamics: The difficulty of integrating sociocultural perspectives into pedagogical practices. *Foreign Language Annals, 41*(4), 639-659.
- Allam, H., & Salmani-Nadoushan, M. A. (2009). *Cognitive orientation in teaching writing*. Karen: Linguistic Issues.
- Annamali, E. (1989). The language factor in code-mixing. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 74*, 47-54.
- Appel, R., & Muysken, P. (2006). *Language contact and bilingualism*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Auer, P. (2002). Introduction to Chapter 4. In P. Auer (Ed.), *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

- Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. New York: New York University Press.
- Babbie, E. (2007). *The practice of social research* (11th ed.). California: The Thomas Wadsworth Corporation.
- Bader, Y. (1995). Code-switching to English in daily conversations in Jordan: Factors and attitudes. *Abhath Al-Yarmouk (Literature and Linguistics Series)*, 13(2), 9-27.
- Ball, J. (2010). *Educational equity for children from diverse language backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years*. Canada: University of Victoria.
- Battenburg, J. D. (2010). *Slang*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbookonline.com/advanced/printarticle?id=ar513880&st=american+slang>
- Bentahila, A., & Davies, E. D. (1983). The syntax of Arabic-French code-switching. *Lingua*, 59, 301-330.
- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing your qualitative dissertation : A roadmap from beginning to end*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Bullard, W., Johnson, S., Morris, J., Fox, K., & Howell, C. (2010). *Slang*. Retrieved from <http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/allam/1914-/language/slang.htm>
- Casteel, C., & Ballantyne, K. (Eds.). (2010). *Professional development in action: Improving teaching for English learners*. Washington, D. C.: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. Retrieved from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/uploads/3/PDF>
- Chen, C. T., Kyle, D. W., & McIntyre, E. (2008). Helping teachers work effectively with English language learners and their families. *School Community Journal*, 18(1), 7-20.
- Cohen, A. D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. London: Longman.
- Corrius, M., & Pujol, D. (2010). Linguistic and cultural strategies in ELT dictionaries. *ELT Journal*, 64(2), 135-142. doi:10.1093/elt/ccp052
- Crim, C., Hawkins, J., Thornton, J., Rosof, H., Copley, J., & Thomas, E. (2008). Early childhood educators' knowledge of early literacy development. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 17(1), 17-30.
- DeCapua, A. (Ed.). (2008). *Grammar for teachers: A guide to American English for native and non-native speakers*. New Rochelle, New York: Springer Science & Business Media, LLC.
- Decker, C., Decker, J., Freeman, N., & Knopf, H. (2009). *Planning and administering early childhood programs* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Deibert, A. (2008). *Code-switching of Russian-German bilinguals*. Norderstedt, Germany: GRIN Verlag.
- Duff, P. A. (2001). Language, literacy, content, and (pop) culture: Challenges for ESL students in mainstream courses. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 58(1), 103-132.
- Fleet, A., & Torr, J. (2007). Literacy assessment: Understanding and recording meaningful data. In L. Makin, C. J. Diaz, & C. McLachlan (Eds.), *Literacies in childhood: Changing views, challenging practice* (2nd ed., pp. 183-199). Sydney: MacLennan & Petty.
- Gardner, R. (2012). What does conversation analysis have to say about second language and second language acquisition? In R. Gardner, & T. Greer (Eds.), *Observing Talk*. Tokyo: Hi Tuzi Shobo.
- Gholson, R., & Stumpf, C. (2005). Folklore, literature, ethnography, and second-language acquisition: Teaching culture in the ESL classroom. *TESL Canada Journal*, 22(2), 75-91.
- Giles, H., Coupland, N., & Coupland, J. (1991). Accommodation theory: Communication, context, and consequence. In H. Giles, J. Coupland, & N. Coupland (Eds.), *Contexts of accommodation: Developments in applied sociolinguistics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Giorgis, C., & Glazer, J. (2008). *Literature for young children: Supporting emergent literacy, ages 0-8* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Gluth, E. (2008). *Code-switching: Grammatical, pragmatic and psycholinguistic aspects: An overview paper*. Norderstedt, Germany: GRIN Verlag.
- Gregg, K. R. (2006). Taking a social turn for the worse: The language socialization paradigm for second language acquisition. *Second Language Research*, 22(4), 413-442. doi:10.1191/0267658306sr274oa

- Griffiths, C., & Parr, J. M. (2001). Language learning strategies: Theory and perception. *ELT Journal*, 53, 247-254.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Gumperz, J. J. (2001). Interactional sociolinguistics: A personal perspective. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 215-228). Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Halmari, H. (1997). *Government and code-switching: Explaining American Finnish*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Hamers, J., & Blanc, M. (2000). *Bilinguality and bilingualism* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harris, P. (2009). *Language learning in the baby and toddler years*. Terrigal, NSW: David Barlow Publishing.
- Helfrich, S. R., & Bosh, A. J. (2011). Teaching English language learners: Strategies for overcoming barriers. *Educational Forum*, 75(3), 260-270.
- Hernandez, T. (2012). *Teach to the middle: A double case study of two multilevel EFL classes in the Middle East*. Paper 544: AYMAT Individual Thesis/SMAT IPP Collection.
- Hill, S. (2007). Chapter 5- Multiliteracies: Towards the future. In L. Makin, C. J. Diaz, & C. McLachlan (Eds.), *Literacies in childhood: Changing views, challenging practice* (2nd ed., pp. 56-70). Sydney: MacLennan & Petty.
- Hinkel, E., & Fotos, S. (Eds.). (2002). *New perspectives on grammar teaching in second language classrooms*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Hussein, B. A.-S. (2013, August). Teaching and learning English-as-a-second/foreign language through mother tongue: A field study. *Asian Social Science*, 9(10), 175-180. doi:10.5539/ass.v9n10p175
- Hymes, D. H. (1964). Introduction: Toward ethnographies of communication. *American Anthropologist*, 66(6 Part 2), 1-34.
- Hymes, D. H. (1967). *The ethnography of speaking*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohio.edu/people/thomsoc/Hymes2.html>
- Joseph, J. E. (2013). Cultural identity. (C. A. Chappelle, Ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. doi:10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0298
- Lefkowitz, N. (1991). *Talking backwards, looking forwards: The French language game verlan*. Germany: Gunter Narr Verlag Tubingen.
- Liu, P. (2008). *Code-switching and code-mixing*. Norderstedt, Germany: GRIN Verlag.
- McKay, S., & Hornberger, N. (1996). *Sociolinguistics and language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Miller, B. D. (2007). *Cultural anthropology* (Custom 4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Duelling languages: Grammatical structure in code-switching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (2000). Code-switching as indexical of social negotiations. In L. Wei (Ed.), *The bilingualism reader* (pp. 127-153). London: Routledge.
- Myers-Scotton, C., Jake, J., & Okasha, M. (1996). Arabic and constraints on code-switching. In M. Eid, & D. Parkinson (Eds.), *Perspectives on Arabic linguistics IX: Papers from the Annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics, Washington D.C.* (pp. 9-44). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Nassaji, H., & Fotos, S. (2011). *Teaching grammar in second language classrooms integrating form-focused instruction in communicative context*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis.
- Newman, M. (2011). *Research methods in psychology*. San Diego, CA: Bridgepoint Education, Inc.
- Otto, B. (2010). *Language development in early childhood* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston: Henle & Heinle.

- Philip, J., Oliver, R., & Mackey, A. (2008). *Second language acquisition and the younger learner: Child's play?* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Poplack, S. (2001). *Code-switching (linguistic)*. Retrieved from <http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~sociolx/CS.pdf>
- Schegloff, E. A. (2001). Discourse as an interactional achievement III: The omnirelevance of action. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 229-249). Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Sybing, R. (2011). Assessing perspectives on culture in EFL education. *ELT Journal: English Language Teachers Journal*, 65(4), 467-469.
- Walte, I. (2007). *The use of code-switching, code-mixing and accommodation*. Norderstedt, Germany: GRIN Verlag.
- Weinreich, U. (1953). *Language in contact: Findings and problems*. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.

Appendix A

Participant Questionnaire & Results

Questions and responses posed to 50 EFL (25 male, 25 female) students at a Middle-Eastern university, 15 EFL professors (10 male, 5 female), 50 regular academic students (25 male, 25 female) and 25 academic professors, (18 male, 7 female).

1. Does culture have to be a part of English Language Learning?

Twenty-seven (27) EFL male students said, No, “we can learn culture as we go through university.”

Twenty-three (23) EFL male students said, Yes, “it is part of English language.”

Forty-four (44) female students said, Yes, “we need to learn all to help with understanding of English language and culture.”

Six (6) female students were unsure.

2. Does culture have to be a part of English Language Teaching?

From both EFL professors and academic professors, all forty (40) faculty members said, Yes, “it is needed, it is a requirement of the learning process. How can this not be put into teaching the language?”

3. Is it possible to consider a language learning environment without teaching the culture?

Twenty-four (24) EFL male students said, Yes, “we only need to know the words to communicate.”

Twenty-six (26) EFL male students said, No, “words do not tell us everything.”

Forty-five (45) female students said, No—“culture of words/how and when to use them are important to understanding the life.”

Five (5) female students were unsure.

4. Is it possible to consider a language learning environment without teaching the culture?

All forty (40) faculty members said, No, “culture must be taught, always.” “Culture helps us explain why something is done a certain way, and culture helps us to explain things when words are not used.”